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SJSU College Of Humanities & the Arts

EXPRESSIONS

Vol.1 Winter 2014

Featured Stories



A Grammy Winner's In the House!

Congratulations to **School of Music and Dance** professor **Aaron Lington** and the **Pacific Mambo Orchestra** for winning the **Best Tropical Latin Album** category at the **56th Annual Grammy Awards**. Dr. Lington played baritone saxophone on and composed half of the compositions comprising the winning album. He has certainly fulfilled an earlier title bestowed upon him by the **Downbeat Magazine** Critic's Poll as a "**Rising Star**" in the Baritone Saxophone category. Dr. Lington is a professor at San José State University, where he serves as Coordinator of Jazz Studies. Read the **full story** by SJSU's Pat Lopes Harris.



SJSU MFA Student Takes the Pentagon by Art

Mark Pinto, a former Marine and current third-year graduate student in photography in SJSU's **Art and Art History Department**, was recently selected in a nation-wide juried show from amongst military veteran artists. His work is featured in the first **Veteran's Art Show** at the Pentagon in Washington D.C. The exhibit opened on November 11, 2013, Veterans Day, and will run for a year—visible to the thousands of Pentagon employees as well as the public on the Pentagon tour. Pinto's digital photograph titled "Homeless Joe" is part of a ten-picture series depicting the difficulties of veterans as they are reintegrated into society. Each photo uses the G.I. Joe action figures as a way of disarming the viewer and bringing them closer to the work. Visit Pinto's **website** to learn more.



Alumna Named National Book Critics Circle Award Nominee

English and Comparative Literature Department alumna **Carmen Giménez-Smith** has been named a finalist for this year's **National Book Critics Circle Award** in Poetry for her new book, **Milk and Filth** (University of Arizona Press). She is also the author of a memoir, three poetry collections, and co-editor of the fiction anthology, **My Mother She Killed Me, My Father He Ate Me** (Penguin, 2010). She is the recipient of a **2011 American Book Award** and now teaches in the creative writing programs at New Mexico State University and Ashland University, while serving as the editor-in-chief of the literary journal **Puerto del Sol**. Awards will be announced March 13, 2014. Listen to Ms. Giménez-Smith read from the book **here**.

Portraits



Professor Janie Scott

From Broadway to the Central Bay

SJSU Humanities and Arts faculty member, **Janie Scott**, has a résumé that could reach the floor if written out. Between her roles on Broadway, her time touring with major productions, and her experience as a choreographer in both the Bay Area and New York, she offers an expansive and crucial perspective on the dance and theater arts communities. For 20 years, SJSU Dance and Theatre Arts majors have had the privilege of dipping into Scott's well of knowledge to help them in their own budding careers. Her punchy, straightforward personality not only adds to her skills as an academic adviser and teacher, but also hints at her success as a performer.

Born an army brat in Camp Cook, CA, her birthplace technically does not exist anymore—now called Vandenberg Air Force Base in Lompoc, CA. “I don’t have a home-place to go back to,” states Scott, who moved every year of her life until the end of her middle school years. Her familiarity with change proved to be a useful skill later in her career, when living in the midst of the theater world. Entering San José State University as a 17-year-old music major, she quickly switched her major after watching a dance class from the doorway. She describes the moment as being “hit by a lightning bolt,” and, as if by divine intervention, she knew that her path had forked. The decision to become a dancer was not based in any level of logic or objectivity, having never taken a dance class in her life, and came with some resistance from her parents. Nevertheless, she plopped herself front and center of every class, a five-foot-tall, redheaded freshman taking every opportunity imaginable to soak in knowledge like a sponge.

Her gung-ho personality and her determination to improve fueled her. She purposefully worked with artists more experienced than herself, who always pushed her to, as she says, “run faster, harder, and jump higher.” Although she felt that her lack of experience would show, she began giving herself the pep talk she would use for years and years to come: “What’s the

worst thing that could happen?” Her love of musicals began, ironically, with a fear of singing publicly—maybe not the best fear for a future Broadway performer. Scott sweated at the idea of auditioning for a musical, but after a bit of a push from a casting director, she auditioned for and was cast in a small production. “They really needed a little one on the end,” Scott explains with a smirk. After three weeks in this production, she no longer felt satisfied with only dance, and needed to engage fully with a character, both physically and vocally.

At age 25, she auditioned for A Chorus Line in San Francisco—“What’s the worst thing that could happen?” After a grueling five-hour audition, the competition weaned down to Scott and two other women for a spot on their tour. Luckily, she made the cut and headed out for the tour as an understudy swing. “My life changed forever,” she explains, pointing to a banner with photos of all of the casts from A Chorus Line. “I have no business being on that poster, nothing like that should have happened when I started dancing at barely 17 and not singing until I was 21, no major résumé, no nothing.” Scott is the definition of a role model in this aspect. From aspiring dancers to already determined performers, she represents the success of a strong will and the eagerness to learn. Professor Scott has worked hard to get where she is, and has many war stories to share with her students: to inspire them, prepare them, and dazzle them.

by Danielle de Ojeda, English
& Comparative Literature Major, SJSU

Portraits



H&A Supporter Bill McGee

Where Music, Literature,
and Computers Collide

When you retire, perhaps you're considering taking up golf or planting roses. But when William McGee retired from IBM, he decided to pursue a life-long dream of studying music and, at 65, enrolled in SJSU's baccalaureate program in music composition. He explored keyboards synthesizers, music theory and the use of technology in digital production. Previously, his last forays down the halls of academia had been in 1949 and 1951, when he earned degrees in physics respectively at UC Berkeley and Columbia, which led to his career as a computer scientist at IBM.

Happily, all these talents merged, and today from his home in Los Altos he uses them in his latest passion: understanding what about music attracts people. His knowledge of mathematics and computer programming has enabled McGee to use probability theory to quantify what musical components are present in popular songs.

McGee's experience at San José State also prompted him to take other actions. After struggling with the outdated equipment in the studio, he created the McGee Music Recording Studio Fund in the School of Music and Dance. These gifts have long-range impact for future students, according to Pablo Furman, professor and coordinator of composition and music technology. "Now, countless students will enjoy taking classes in a new studio and learning critical skills necessary for successful work in digital sound production."

McGee made other generous donations, including one to keep Reed Magazine, the campus literary journal founded in 1898, in print. "I'd like to see Reed Magazine continue; it's had a very long history," he said, noting that our campus lays proud claim to producing the oldest literary journal west of the Mississippi.

In addition, this alumnus created the Ruth MacLean McGee Scholarship Fund for the Department of English and Comparative Literature in the name of his late wife, Ruth, a writer. Mr. McGee's rationale for this gift was based on his observations of patterns in higher education: "English departments are typically underfunded, and it seemed like a good way to support them."

Today, our students in the College of Humanities and the Arts benefit from the old and the new, thanks to the generosity of one of our alumni—the latest cutting-edge technology used in music composition and the preservation of Reed Magazine.

by Cathleen Miller

It's a Dean's Life



The new year has started with a bang in Humanities and the Arts. **Professor Aaron Lington's Grammy award** has everyone buzzing with excitement about the talented faculty in our midst. The Pacific Mambo Orchestra, of which Professor Lington is a founding member, won in the Best Tropical Album category for their self-titled album. [Learn more.](#)

Looking back on last year, I cannot help but feel tremendously proud about the accomplishments of the College. The fall 2013 celebrations around the Art Centennial went off without a hitch. **Exhibits** continue through the spring, and the gorgeous catalog is available for purchase through the **Art and Art History Department** for those who miss the shows.

In December, we were privileged to host the great American filmmaker Ken Burns, when he received the **2013 Steinbeck Award**. Mr. Burns spent the afternoon with enthralled students, faculty, and staff in dialogue about telling America's stories through film. [Watch the video.](#) The sold-out evening event featured **Mr. Burns in conversation with KQED's Michael Krasny**. Past winners include influential artists and public figures, such as Bruce Springsteen, John Mellencamp, Rachel Maddow, and Michael Moore.

The numerous events sponsored by the **Center for Literary Arts**, the **Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies**, and the new **Steinbeck in the Schools** site created for teachers and students by the **Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies** are just a few examples of the ongoing programming that nourishes our university and our community.

This spring holds the promise of many amazing events in the College, including a College-wide celebration of the 75th anniversary of the publication of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. The School of Music and Dance will be collaborating with the Department of TV, Radio, Film, and Theatre to produce both the opera and the theatre production of this great American novel. For tickets, please visit the **School of Music and Dance** or **TV, Radio,**

Film, and Theatre. In addition to numerous exhibits in the **Natalie and James Thompson Gallery** and the March 6 inaugural **Kazuki Fukuda-Abe Lecture Series** in Contemporary Japanese Art event, we also will be opening our College Student Success Center this semester in Clark Hall, which will provide an opportunity for students to receive enhanced advising, career services, and internship opportunities. Finally, we look forward to hosting a *Donor Recognition Event* on April 22 from 3-5pm to honor the supporters who so generously contribute to scholarships and program support in H&A.

The **College of Humanities & the Arts** has created this newsletter, *Expressions*, as a vehicle for publicizing our accomplishments, probing the impacts of humanities and arts education, and celebrating all aspects of the creativity that we nurture in our students and the surrounding community. Just as **SJSU is Powering Silicon Valley**, the College of Humanities and the Arts is *Powering Creativity*. But we need your help to tell others about the wonderful work we have done for more than 100 years to promote excellence in liberal arts education.

Please help us spread the word about the high-quality, high-impact educational experiences we provide in H&A! Like us on **Facebook** and post stories there about the impact SJSU and H&A have had on you and on the community. Or follow us on **Twitter**, where you can read frequent updates about Humanities & the Arts as well as trends in public higher education nationwide. Please also join our **mailing list** or **share your stories** with us. We would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Vollendorf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Lisa Vollendorf, Dean

News & Congratulations

CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE STUDENTS:

Art and Art History's students for making it into this year's "**SJSU Best of 2013**" events with their beautiful watercolor exhibit. Moreover, the work of MFA art students **Alyssa Eustaquio**, **Ninh Filip**, **Mark Pinto**, and **Biagio Scarpello** was chosen for exhibition in **Root Division's MFA NOW** in January 2014. This year's exhibition was curated by Donna Napper from the **San José Institute of Contemporary Art**.

Design Department students **Christy Becker** and **Hillary Bradfield**, both Animation/Illustration majors. Christy won second place at the CSU Media Arts Festival with her feature screenplay Coyote Children, and Hillary won "Best in Show" and first place in the Animation category for her film "Edith and the Bear." Read more.

English and Comparative Literature students **David T. Coad**, **Kelly Curtis**, **Jonathan Cook**, with contributions by **Valerie Cruz**, **Dylan Grozdanich**, **Randy Holaday**, **Amanda Kolstad**, **Alexander James Papoulias**, **Ilyssa Russ**, **Genevieve Sanvictores**, **Erik White**, and the original Beardstair team **Colette Hayes** (a School of Library and Information Science student), **Doll Piccotto**, and **Pollyanna Macchiano** for their publication of "**BeardStair: A Student-Run Digital Humanities Project History, Fall 2011 to May 16, 2013**."

Humanities Honors student **Jacky Mai** for winning the third annual **Norton Poetry Recitation Contest**. Each contestant was required to submit a video of the poem recitation, and Mai recited "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun (Sonnet 130)" by William Shakespeare. **Watch his reading**.

Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre students, who produced the **video of Macbeth** that aired on **CreaTV** in November 2013, and the students in Professor **Harry Mathias's** fall 2013 cinematography class who filmed people reading the Gettysburg Address during the **Ken Burns campus visit**. **Read more** about the **Address Initiative**.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE FACULTY & STAFF:

Art and Art History professor **Gale Antokal**, whose work appears in the December 2013 issue of **New American Paintings, Pacific Coast Edition**. Thirty-five artists were selected from over 1,000 applicants. Her work was also featured on the cover of the fall 2013 cover of **Thought and Action**.

English and Comparative Literature professor **Katherine D. Harris**, who took a project manager position with the California Open Educational Resources Council. The goal of the Council is to create the first version of the California Open Source Digital Library. Read more about the initiative **here**.

Philosophy professor **Bo Mou** for publishing the most recent issue of **Comparative Philosophy**, an international open-access journal.

School of Music and Dance professor **Brian Belet** for his composition for piano and electronics, **Summer Phantoms: Nocturne**, which was recorded by pianist Keith Kirchoff in Boston in 2013.

The **School of Music and Dance** received a \$5,000 grant for the oboe studio from the **DEW Foundation** to purchase oboe reed-making tools and equipment. In December, the studio also received a donation of professional-level oboes worth \$7,500 from Audrey Gore of San José, CA. Thank you, Ms. Gore, for your support! Read more about our oboe program **here**.

School of Music and Dance professor **Diana Hollinger** was unanimously selected as the outstanding music educator by the **Bay Section CMEA**. She also has been invited to guest conduct "Works for Band by Women Composers" at the 2014 **California All-State Music Education Conference**.

Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre professor **York Kennedy** was nominated by the **San Diego Theatre Critics for a Craig Noel Award** for Outstanding Lighting Design on the **Old Globe Theatre's** production of **Other Desert Cities**. Winners will be announced at the Craig Noel Award ceremony on February 10, 2014.

Events

For all events in the College of Humanities and the Arts, please visit our [events calendar](#).

Upcoming events include:

Through March 7: Photography Faculty Exhibition

Feb. 5–8: Tartuffe. Hal Todd Theatre. 8pm.

Feb. 5: Cristina Garcia Reading and Book Signing. Center for Literary Arts event. MLK225. 7pm.

Feb. 9: Veronica Christie Recital. Music Concert Hall. 4:30pm.

Feb. 10: Jazz Master Class. Music 250.

Feb. 11: “Do you have the will to lead?” Lecture by Peter Koestenbaum. ENG189. 12pm.

Feb. 14–15: SJDanceCO. SPX219. 7:00pm. Also 2:30pm on 2/15/14.

Feb. 18: Tuesday Night Lecture. ART133. 5pm.

Feb. 19: D.A. Powell Reading and Book Signing. Center for Literary Arts event. MLK225. 7pm.

Feb. 24: Faculty Recital: Michael Adducci. Music Concert Hall. 7:30pm.

Feb. 24–27: Graphic Design 120 Exhibit. ART214.

Feb. 25: Tuesday Night Lecture. ART133.

Feb. 25: Angela Wu: Thesis. Optics Book Release. ART Building Gallery 3. 6pm.

Feb. 26: Choreography. SPX219. 1:15pm.

Feb. 28: Choral Invitational. All day. Music 247.

March 3: Jazz Orchestra. Music Concert Hall. 7:30pm.

March 3–6: Graphic Design 120 Exhibit. ART214.

March 3–9: FOREIGN LANGUAGE WEEK. Numerous events scheduled. See website for details.

March 4: Misako Rocks (Japanese Graphic Novelist). Foreign Language Week Event also sponsored by Center for Literary Arts. MLK225. 5pm.

March 7–8: DanceWorks Presents. SPX219. 7pm. Also 2:30pm on March 8.

March 10–13: Graphic Design 120 Exhibit. ART214.

March 10: Symphonic Band. Music Concert Hall. 7:30pm.

March 11: Wind Ensemble. Music Concert Hall. 7:30pm.

March 11: Symphony Orchestra. Music Concert Hall. 7:30pm.

March 18–May 16: The Intimate Diebenkorn Exhibit. [Natalie and James Thompson Gallery](#). Opening lecture and reception 3/18 @ 5pm.

March 19: Latin Jazz Ensemble. Music Concert Hall. 7:30pm.

March 20: Guitar Ensemble. Music Concert Hall. 7:30pm.

The College of Humanities and the Arts sponsors more than 400 cultural and artistic events every year.

April–July events to be announced in our next newsletter postings.

For all events in the College of Humanities and the Arts, please visit our [events calendar](#).



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